

BEDDING TIME AT HAND FOR BLUEGILL/SHELLCRACKER

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Kentucky Lake's fishing scene warmed up this week courtesy of some summer days that slipped in the door a bit early.

Surface temperatures climbed into the 72 to 75 degree range in most areas and that has really stimulated the spawning phases of bluegill and shellcracker. Despite several days of annoying wind, anglers have chalked up some hefty catches as the bite has really turned on.

The first full moon of May arrives next Wednesday, a scenario that most veteran bluegill and shellcracker fishermen feel signals peak spawning time. It appears some already good fishing will get even better as these feisty rascals have been attacking crickets with an attitude the last few days.

Showing up in increased numbers this week have been shellcracker too as these powerful panfish were taking redworms, meal worms, and crickets. Several fish were out from shoreline habitat earlier in the week in depths of 4 to 6 feet but began moving up shallow at midweek toward buck bushes and submerged grassbeds.

Lake levels had been falling late last week and dropped below normal summer pool for a few days, a situation that pulled a few shellcracker and bluegill back off the banks. However, TVA allowed the reservoir to slowly rebound to the summer pool reading of 359 at midweek and fish were in the process of moving toward shoreline habitat.

Projections for the weekend show the elevation will be 359 at Kentucky Dam. Upstream at New Johnsonville lake levels will be slightly lower with a forecast for the 358.7 range.

Water color has been dingy in the upper ends of bays and in the main Tennessee River channel this week but clearing in the main lake portion of Big Sandy and around Paris Landing. High winds had whipped up sediments in some places along shorelines.

Bass anglers had a pretty good week with a variety of patterns paying off. Some good numbers of fish have been taken this week by anglers pitching and flipping Texas rigged craws, lizards, and worms around visible buck brush and treelaps.

Black and blue colored craws and lizards were working well but some pockets off the main lake had dingy water while others were quite clear so color combinations were varying as to their popularity. Gold willow-leaf spinnerbaits were also working well as the shallow cover was holding lots of bass.

Topwater action improved lately as well with buzzbaits cast over those popular yellow flowers mixed with buck bushes producing plenty of strikes.

Some boaters are backing off the shorelines and working sloping gravel and mud bar points with Carolina rigged craws, Alabama rigs, crankbaits and jig and pig combos. Backing off the banks can be productive when some post-spawn bass stage there or the big females transition away from shallow spawning territory and park in-between summer their summer haunts and shoreline visits.

Catfishing was on the upswing too as some dandies have been taken this week from both bank fishermen and those working shallow coves and rocky banks. A lot of smaller catfish are being caught by bluegill fishermen as the catfish love to infiltrate bluegill bedding areas once eggs are present or small fry begin to hatch off.

Watch for some increased activity in the days ahead for any rocky bluffs and rip-rap banks as the catfish come shallow to spawn.

Crappie were entering their second week of post-spawn phases and while somewhat scattered and sluggish, a few were still being caught. Some decent stringers were taken this week up Big Sandy by anglers vertical fishing jigs around shallow stakebeds. Other techniques producing were slow trolling crankbaits in bays where some suspended fish were riding it out in depths of 8 to 12 feet.

A few male crappie are lingering in shallow structure and still displaying their handsome purple appearance which occurs when hormonal changes increase pigment. It's likely a few late spawning fish were still at it last week and earlier this week.

The fishing scene has embraced warmer weather this week, although most anglers are still somewhat bewildered with the wicked wind. With catfish on the prowl, bedding bluegill and shellcracker jerking bobbers under right and left, bass in the bushes and a few scattered crappie still being caught it's high time to go fishing.

Business is good!